

VA's National Center for Patient Safety Director Visits Dallas VAMC

Dr. James Bagian, Director of the National Center for Patient Safety at VA visited Dallas VAMC in March. He has a diverse and unique list of accomplishments as a NASA physician and astronaut; U.S. Air Force flight surgeon; and engineer with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Navy and Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Bagian's 15-year tenure at NASA included two space shuttle flights – Discovery in 1989 and Columbia in 1991. He led the development of a high altitude pressure suit for crew escape and other crew survival equipment to be used on future shuttle missions and was first to employ a treatment of space motion sickness that has become the standard of care for sick astronauts. In February 2003, he was appointed as Chief Flight Surgeon/Medical Consultant to the Columbia accident investigation.



*"Patient Safety,
Why Bother?"*

Dr. Bagian developed and implemented an innovative patient safety program that has been implemented at all VA hospitals as well as several European and Asian nations which is considered the benchmark for patient safety in the U.S. and internationally. His visit to Dallas included lectures to medical and clinical staff as well as a general audience where he challenged caregivers to consider how our daily actions influence patient safety.



VA National Center for Patient Safety
Veterans Health Administration

Culture Change: Prevention, Not Punishment

+ Virtually all healthcare organizations prior to the 1999 publication of the Institute of Medicine's landmark report, *To Err is Human*, engaged in investigations of events that caused harm to patients. Few of these investigations, however, engaged in a systems-based approach to problem solving. The focus was on individuals and mistakes, rather than on the cluster of events that had combined in an unfortunate sequence to cause an incident to occur. Based on a "name and blame" culture, the emphasis of such investigations was not on prevention, but on punishment. By shifting the goal from eliminating errors to reducing or eliminating harm to patients - through investigating the viability of medical care systems, rather than focusing on individual acts - much has been accomplished at VA. The goal is simple: reduction and prevention of inadvertent harm to our patients as a result of their care.

From the Director

Spring has sprung, and I'm looking forward to Texas bluebonnets and wild flowers! I'm proud of VANTHCS employees who continue to have fresh ideas and suggestions to enhance the care we provide our patients. I was particularly proud of the attendance for Dr. Bagian's patient safety presentations. We must always keep patient safety issues and concerns on the forefront. Together we are moving forward to make VANTHCS the best health care system it can be.



Betty Bolin Brown

Some Sleeping Pill Users Range Far Beyond Bed

By STEPHANIE SAUL

With a tendency to stare zombie-like and run into stationary objects, a new species of impaired motorist is hitting the roads: the Ambien driver. Ambien, the nation's best-selling prescription sleeping pill, is showing up with regularity as a factor in traffic arrests, sometimes involving drivers who later say they were sleep-driving and have no memory of taking the wheel after taking the drug.

The New York Times nytimes.com The chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation for the VA North Texas Health System in Dallas, Dr. Weibin Yang, said he became aware of Ambien's potential side effects while at another hospital treating a 55-year-old patient after hip surgery. The man, who had no history of sleepwalking, walked into a hospital corridor one night, where he urinated on the floor. On another night, he got out of bed and told nurses he was going to church. Dr. Yang said the patient was also taking other medications, but the sleepwalking stopped when Ambien was discontinued. The patient, he said, had no recollection of either event. Dr. Yang said such experiences persuaded him that people could drive, without realizing it, after taking Ambien.

Read the entire article at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/08/business/08ambien.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
Dr. Yang has been interviewed by international media regarding Ambien.



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Eight for Excellence

VHA has undergone profound changes over the past 10 years, which have proven both rewarding and challenging. VHA has positioned itself as a national leader in health care and has adopted 'Eight for Excellence' to provide safe, effective and compassionate health care in a time of complex changes in health care and financial constraints.

1. Continuously improve the quality and safety of health care for veterans, particularly in those health issues associated with military service.
2. Provide timely and appropriate access to health care by implementing best practices.
3. Continuously improve veterans and families satisfaction with VA care by promoting patient-centered care and excellent customer service.
4. Promote diversity, excellence and satisfaction in the workforce and foster a culture which encourages innovation.
5. Promote excellence in business practices through administrative, financial and clinical efficiencies.
6. Focus research and development on clinical and system improvements designed to enhance the health and well-being of veterans.
7. Promote excellence in the education of future health care professionals and enhance VHA partnerships with affiliates.
8. Promote health within VA, local communities and the nation that is consistent with VA's mission.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Commemorating 75 years of service



A state-of-the-art Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory opened in February at Dallas VAMC offers superior image quality and reduced radiation exposure to patients. Three laboratories are currently in operation, one dedicated to electrophysiological procedures and two dedicated to angiography and interventions.

Catheterization services are offered 24/7 by an experienced team of 3 technicians, 2 nurses, 3 physician assistants, 1 administrative assistant, and 2 full-time interventional cardiologists. More than 1,300 procedures were performed during 2005, a substantial growth in the number and complexity of cases performed. Patients are now routinely admitted with unstable angina or heart attacks and receive cardiac catheterization early after arrival, resulting in limited damage to the heart muscle.

A full spectrum of services are currently performed, including:

- Coronary angiography (looking at blockages in the arteries of the heart) and complex coronary interventions (fixing those blockages with balloon and small metal coils called stents).
- Complete physiologic assessment of the coronary arteries using intravascular ultrasonography (ultrasound from “inside” the artery and intracoronary pressure measurements (measuring the pressure “inside” the artery)
- Coronary angiography using the arm, allowing the patient to ambulate early
- Myocardial biopsy
- Pericardiocentesis (draining fluid around the heart)
- Complete cardiac hemodynamic assessment, including assessment for restriction/constriction (checking the pressures inside all the chambers of the heart)
- Intra-aortic balloon pump placement
- Peripheral artery angiography and interventions, including 3 dimensional reconstruction of the arteries
- Percutaneous closure of a patent foramen ovale and an atrial septal defects (“holes” in the heart) – patients used to have to undergo open heart surgery to correct those abnormalities
- Intracardiac echocardiography



Cardiology Fellow Dr. Anand Prasad observes as Dr. Sahbash Banerjee prepares for a procedure.

The Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory is also very active in research. An ongoing randomized trial is examining the role of drug-eluting stents in saphenous vein graft lesions. Another study examines the utility of endothelial progenitor cells in healing coronary arteries.



Public Affairs is always interested to hear a story idea or learn about something going on in your Service - just send it to Penny Kerby via Outlook.



Around VANTHCS



Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center proudly joined the Nation in celebrating Women's History Month in March. Cindy Godbey, SRMVC Federal Women's Program Manager, organized a display of women employees at SRMVC, highlighting their active roles in community service and contributions to society.

Recently I received a call from Shirley Boles in MAS who had a rather interesting patient in her office. She wanted me to come and meet him – I'm glad I did. by Penny Kerby

When I walked in her office Mr. Herbert Westphal of Cleburne was waiting with his daughter. Mr. Westphal was enrolling at the VA for the first time and was going through the usual processes. Not unusual, right – but Mr. Westphal was 100 years old, soon to be 101 in July!

Mr. Westphal looked great and was in remarkably good health for his age. He is a former doctor and delivered babies in South Texas in the mid 1930s. He said he probably delivered 4,000-5,000 babies in his career. Times were certainly different then – he charged \$15, and the delivery room was usually a blanket of some kind on the floor.

Mr. Westphal was among a group of Army doctors in the 3rd Auxiliary Surgery Group. They were divided in teams behind the lines in a field hospital in Germany during World War II. He recalled the bombing at St. Lo. They were working with wounded all night and took cover in a foxhole when he saw thousands of planes dropping bombs with shrapnel falling all around. He remembers landing on Omaha Beach June 22, 1944.



When I asked him what he remembered most about his experiences in the military, he told me about a time in Friedberg, Germany. There were thousands of armed German soldiers standing along two sides. Someone handed a gun to the sergeant next to him and said, "Take it." When this happened, the Germans threw down their weapons and surrendered to nearly 30 American soldiers.

Mr. Westphal said there were two things he wanted to do before he died – one was to be in the VA system, and the other was to return to his homeland in Argentina. He became a 'card carrying' VA man last week and will make the trip to Argentina next month with two of his grandchildren.

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